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# History of Hampton

AND

Elizabeth City County,  
Virginia



COMPILED BY

LYON G. TYLER, M.A., LL. D.

PUBLISHED BY

The Board of Supervisors of Elizabeth City County  
Hampton, Virginia  
1922





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To

*The Confederate Veterans*

of the Peninsula, who gave up homes and all for the  
cause of their State, for four long years on battle-  
fields of fame served the land they loved to  
the best of their great ability and then  
returned to find their homes in ruins  
and ashes, this little volume is  
dedicated as a tribute of in-  
effable remembrance.

Composed 1912 for the Retail Merchants Association  
by Lyon G. Tyler, M. A., LL. D., and now published  
in pamphlet form by the Board of Supervisors of  
Elizabeth City County, Virginia, November, 1922.

# FOREWORD

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Dear old Hampton, with its colonial, Revolutionary, 1812, and Civil War memories, has endured and survived much. We of the present Hampton, we who love this old place either because it is our home by inheritance or adoption must carry on and remember that we are its guardians and makers and that the Hampton of the future will be the sort of place we are making it today.

With a deep and abiding love for the place of his birth and a keen interest in her welfare the first steps were taken by Hunter R. Booker, youngest son of Major and Mrs. George Booker, of Sherwood estate, now Langley Field, Elizabeth City County, who brought to the attention of his fellow towns and countrymen his wish that a history of Hampton be compiled as a matter of civic concern.

In accord with this viewpoint the Retail Merchants Association of Hampton gave the money for this project and the history was written by Dr. Lyon G. Tyler, eminent Virginia genealogist and former President of the College of William and Mary.

With commendable public spirit the Board of Supervisors of Elizabeth City County made up of Messrs. W. R. Rawlins, A. L. Dixon, Hunter R. Booker, as members, and H. H. Holt, clerk, made an appropriation for the publication of this history.

In 1896 the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities put upon the old light house at Cape Henry a bronze tablet with these words upon it: "Near this spot landed April 26, 1607, Capt. Gabriell Archer, Hon. George S. Percy, Christopher Newport, Bartholomew Gosnold, Edward Maria Wingfield, with 25 others, who calling the place Cape Henry, planted a cross April 29, 1607."

That same evening, toward dusk, while attempting to enter James River the colonists struck what is now known as Willoughby Spit, the eastern end of Hampton Roads, where "they found shallow water for a great way."

The next day April 30, they rowed to a point of land

on the opposite side of Hampton Roads where they found a channel "which put us in good comfort. Therefore we named that point of land Cape Comfort (present Old Point Comfort)." Upon the invitation of some friendly Indians to come ashore to their town called by them Kecoughtan, Captain John Smith says: "Wee coasted to their town running over a river running into the main where these savages swam over with their bowes and arrows in their mouths." "Kecoughtan," continues the doughty Captain, "has a convenient harbor for fisheries, boats or small boats, that so conveniently turneth itself into Bayes and Creeks that make that place very pleasant to inhabit, their corn-fields being girded thereon as peninsulars." "The abundance of fish, fowls, and deer" was noted.

To such a goodly place some of the colonists returned after three years, from Jamestown, in 1610, making a permanent settlement at Kecoughtan. Thus it is that the present Hampton occupying a place near the site of the Indian village is the oldest English settlement in the United States in continuous existence. Hampton may well be proud of this priority and others. The Church came with the colonists and the first church was probably erected in Kecoughtan in 1620. The walls of the present St. John's Church have stood since 1728. The three old pieces of communion silver now in use in St. John's Church bear the "hallmark" of 1618. This plate has been in use in America longer than any English Church plate now known to be in existence. These pieces "were given by Miss Mary Robinson of London to a church endowed by her in Smith's hundred in Virginia which lay in the point between the Chickahominy and the James rivers. This church was endowed especially with the hope of converting the Indians; but the settlement was almost destroyed by them in the great massacre of 1622. At this time these vessels were carried by Governor Yeardley to Jamestown. Years afterwards they were given to the parish of Elizabeth City." The present Syms-Eaton School is a continuation of the oldest free school in America, there having been no break in its history since its establishment in 1634, by Benj. Syms and Thos. Eaton.

We, of Virginia, are justly proud that no matter what services were rendered in raising the superstructure of our

present national government, the foundation-stone of constitutional liberty for the English speaking race was laid firmly and irremovably at Jamestown. The House of Burgesses convened there from 1619 to 1698. In 1698 the seat of government was moved from Jamestown to Middle Plantation (Williamsburg) which lies half in James City and half in York County. Many of us in the peninsular counties had forebears who sat in this august assemblage. Representing Kecoughtan at this first Legislative Assembly held in the New World at Jamestown in 1619, were William Tucker, and William Capps. These gentlemen were commissioned to ask the House of Burgesses for a change of name for Kecoughtan. Says an old chronicle concerning that event: "Some people, in pious frame of mind, took a spite at Kecoughtan name and said a name so heathen should not be for a people so pious as we, and suggesting some other names, they made their grudges to old King James, and so the King a new name found, for this fine section and all around."

The name Kecoughtan does not appear regularly in legal documents from 1619. The new name, Elizabeth City, was called after the daughter of King James I. The corporation of Elizabeth City developed into Elizabeth City County in 1634. In 1705 the town of Hampton was founded by an act of the Legislature. The name was in honor of the English Earl of Southampton.

The American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the War Between the States left their impress on old Hampton. In 1812 and again in 1861, the "Gamecock Town" was burned. Attesting their loyalty to and love for the cause of the Confederacy, the inhabitants, in August, 1861, set fire to their own homes rather than have them fall into the hands of the Federal troops who were approaching. General Macgruder commanded the Confederates.

"Furl that Banner! True, 'tis gory,  
Yet 'tis wreathed around with glory,  
And 'twill live in song and story,  
Though its folds are in the dust."

The loyalty of Hampton to the Union has been tried and proved in the Spanish-American, and World Wars. Side by side the descendants of the followers of Lee and

those of the followers of Grant clad in khaki, a blend of the blue and the gray, battled for the same principle, the same cause, and a common country.

Dear old Hampton! For you, indeed, does love make memory eternal. Blessed memories are yours—"memories of images and precious thoughts that shall not die, and cannot be effaced."

To new Hampton, God bless her.

Hark forward! Carry on!

BESSIE LEE BOOKER

# HISTORY OF HAMPTON AND ELIZABETH CITY COUNTY

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## Old Kecoughtan, 1607-1619

THERE are few more picturesque regions in the world than the Peninsula on which the town of Hampton is situated. The wealth of water scenery is of mingled advantage and beauty. On the east, parallel to the coast line of the ocean, stretches the noble basin of the Chesapeake Bay twenty miles wide. On the north are the blue waters of the magnificent York River, and on the south is the great bay called Hampton Roads, into which the rushing James pours its yellow tide. The land is a fertile, sandy, alluvial and remarkably level, and the landscape is beautiful with the silvery windings of Back River, Hampton River, Mill Creek and Harris' Creek.

At the arrival of the first white settlers the conditions in this favored region were quite different from conditions elsewhere. While in the rest of Virginia the land was mostly covered with great forests of oak, gum, poplar, hickory and chestnut, here was an open field of two thousand or three thousand acres or more, quite ready for extensive agricultural operations. The waters around swarmed with crabs and valuable fish, and on the beds beneath the sheet of liquid blue lay great quantities of oysters, clams and mussels. Thus, the means of subsistence were abundant, and we are not surprised to hear that, some years before the English arrived, the region was sometimes the seat of as many as a thousand Indians and 300 wigwams. On account of their numbers the Indians were called Kecoughtans meaning the inhabitants of the "great town," but the name Kecoughtan applied more to a region than a collection of buildings. As a region, Kecoughtan was pretty near identical with the modern Elizabeth City and Warwick Counties. It extended perhaps northward along the James as far as Skiffe's Creek and along the York as far as Pocason River, averaging from East to West about fifteen miles, and from North to South, between the two rivers five miles.

These Indians were members of a Confederacy of about 34 tribes occupying Tidewater Virginia, of which Powhatan was war-chief or headwerowance. They belonged to the Algonquin race, and were far less barbarous than the wild inhabitants of the Mississippi region. Like the other tribes of the Powhatan Confederacy, they had a territory defined by natural bounds and their villages had a permanent character and place. They were composed of houses oval in shape made of bark set upon a frame-work of bent saplings.

On account of their strength, Powhatan regarded the Kecoughtan tribe with suspicion, which was much increased by the warnings of his medicine men. It is said by Strachey<sup>1</sup> that Powhatan was informed by them that "from the Chesapeake Bay a nation would arise that should dissolve and give end to his empire." Powhatan bided his time, and while things were in confusion by reason of the death of the old Kecoughtan werowance, he suddenly invaded the territory, killed the new chief and most of his people and settled the survivors in the remote region of the Pianketank. And it was not the Kecaughtans only that he involved in slaughter, but the Chesapeakes also who inhabited on the south side of the bay, and, therefore, "lay under the suspicion of the same phophecy." In the room of the former inhabitants Powhatan placed at these places some of his own people on whom he could rely. At Kecoughtan he made his son Pochins werowance, but the new comers there did not exceed over thirty warriors or 150 men, women and children.

This was the condition of things in the Bay region on April 26, 1607, when the famous fleet consisting of the **Sarah Constant**, the **Goodspeed** and the **Discovery**, under command of Captain Christopher Newport, sailed with the founders of the Nation through the broad water gateway between Cape Charles and Cape Henry into Chesapeake Bay. Anchoring three days off Cape Henry, they broke the seal of the box which contained the names of the council, explored the Country, and subsequently set up a cross, taking possession in the name of King James of England. On April 30th, they came with their ships to a long, sandy point of land which they called Cape Comfort, because of the deep water, which was found there, and which put the navi-

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<sup>1</sup> William Strachey, *Travaile into Virginia Brittannia*.



gators in "good comfort" of being able to pass into the safe harbor beyond. Here Captain Newport caused the shallop to be manned and rowed to the mainland, where he saw an Indian village of eighteen wigwams. Captain George Percy, brother of the Earl of Northumberland, gives us this account of this first meeting of the white men and the savages:

"When we came first a land they made a doleful noise, laying their faces to the ground, scratching the earth with their nails. We did thinke they had beene at their Idolatry. When they had ended their Ceremonies, they went into their houses and brought out mats and laid upon the ground: The chiefest of them sate all in a rank; the meanest sort brought us such dainties as they had, and of their bread which they make of their Maiz or Gennea wheat. They would not suffer us to eat unless we sate down, which we did on a mat right against them. After we were well satisfied they gave us of their tobacco, which they tooke in a pipe made artificially of earth as ours are, but far bigger, with the bowle fashioned together with a piece of fine copper. After they had feasted us, they showed us, in welcome, their manner of dancing, which was in this fashion. One of the savages standing in the midst singing, beating one hand against another, all the rest dancing about him, shouting, howling, and stamping against the ground, with many Anticke tricks and faces, making noise like so many Wolves or Devils. One thing of them I observed; when they were in their dance they kept stroke with their feet just one with another, but with their hands, heads, faces and bodies, every one of them had a severall gesture; so they continued for the space of halfe an houre. When they had ended their dance, the Captain gave them Beades and other trifling jewells."

The curious antics of the Indians described in the above paragraph had probably a deeper meaning than Percy suspected. The religion of the Powhatan Indians consisted in a belief in a great number of devils, who were to be warded off by pow-wows and conjurations, and they were inclined to believe that Percy and his friends, if not devils, were messengers sent by devils. The pipes displayed were probably the peace pipes, which were often of very large dimensions and curiously carved.

The map of Captain John Smith and other contemporary evidence show that the site of the Indian village was very near the spot on which the present Soldiers' Home is located.

The settlers on this visit did not stay long, but sailed up the river and established themselves May 14th, on the Island of Jamestown. In doing this they made a great mistake, for the Island was very unhealthful, very accessible to Indian attacks, and was covered with morasses and huge trees centuries old. As Dr. Philip Alexander Bruce observes: "The proper site for the colony was the modern Hampton." The action of the settlers was dictated by the London Company, who were afraid of the Spaniards, but as subsequent events proved, a nearer settlement to the seashore would have resulted in no real danger. The Spanish Kingdom had lost power, and the open country of Kecoughtan would have promoted health and enabled the colonists to go to work at once in providing adequate sustenance; moreover the settlement protected by wide stretches of water, could have been readily defended against Indian attacks. In the midst of such abundance as the place afforded there could have been no Starving Time as at Jamestown in 1610. It is true that a settlement at Kecoughtan however would have involved a speedy conflict with the savages, which the London Company deprecated, but this the colonists did not avoid by placing their settlement at Jamestown. They were attacked almost immediately.

In December, 1607, Captain John Smith paid a visit to these Indians of Kecoughtan for trade, and returned to Jamestown with a good supply of fish, oysters, corn and deer meat, which he obtained from them for a few glass beads. Smith stopped here again when he returned in July, 1608, after his exploration of Chesapeake Bay. The gallant captain at this time was suffering from a wound inflicted by a stingray, and one of his men had his shins bruised; and we are told that the Indians surmised that they had had a bloody battle experience. The captain fell in with their humor, and soon the report spread far and wide, that Captain Smith had badly beaten the Massawomekes, the inveterate enemies of the Powhatans. On his departing from Jamestown for his second exploration of the Bay not long after, Smith made another stop of two or three days at

Kecoughtan, where he was "feasted with much mirth." The next year a party, including Captain Francis West, Captain George Percy and Captain Smith spent Christmas week among these savages. Their own account was: "We were never more merry nor fed on more plentie of good oysters, fish, flesh, and wild fowle and good breade, nor never had better fires in England than in the dry smoky houses of Kecoughtan."

### Fort Algernourne

Kecoughtan was recognized as a strategic situation, and after Captain Smith's departure for England, in October, 1609, George Percy, the President, sent Captain John Ratcliffe down to the mouth of the river to build a fort. He chose the present site of Fort Monroe, and called his stockade "Algernourne Fort," in honor of President Percy's ancestor William Algernourne de Percy, who came to England with William the Conqueror. Soon after began the Starving Time at Jamestown, during which most of the settlers died. Captain Ratcliffe, while on a trading voyage to the York, was betrayed and killed by the savages, and his place at Point Comfort was supplied by Captain James Davis. Only some sixty wretched survivors were at Jamestown when the Spring of 1610 arrived, and these would have perished but for the almost miraculous arrival of Sir Thomas Gates and the passengers of the **Sea Venture**, who had been wrecked for forty weeks on the Bermuda Islands. They reached Point Comfort May 21, 1610, and through Captain Davis, Governor Gates was first made acquainted with the terrible condition of things at Jamestown.

Here again was the stopping place two weeks later of Sir Thomas West, Lord Delaware, who arrived just in time to prevent the desertion of Virginia by Gates. There was then waiting at Point Comfort, a little pinnace called the "Virginia," built on the coast of Maine, and the only product of the colony sent out, to that region in 1607 by the Plymouth Company. It had been sent down from Jamestown by Governor Gates to take on Captain Davis and his guard; and the colonists at Jamestown were momentarily expected. Delaware at once dispatched the **Virginia** up the river, and the ships from Jamestown were met off Mulberry

Island. Under orders the departing ships tacked about and sailed back to the old place of settlement, and, in the evening of June 8th, 1610, the colonists again took possession of their forlorn habitations.

### **Forts Henry and Charles**

Not long after their return, a white man named Humphrey Blunt, who had strayed off to himself, was killed by some Kecoughtan Indians, near the point on James River which bears his name. To punish the murderers Sir Thomas Gates took a squad of men, and on July 9th, 1610, drove the werowance Pochins and his tribe away from their village; and built near the shore two stockades, called Forts Henry and Charles, "a musket shot apart from one another." William Box, one of the first settlers, described these small defences as named in honor of "our most noble Prince (Henry), and his hopeful brother (Charles)." "They stand upon a pleasant plaine, and neare a little Revilet they called Southampton River; in a wholsom aire, having plentie of Springs of sweet water; they command a great circuit of ground, containing wood, pasture and marsh, with apt places for vines, corne, and Gardens; in which Fort it is resolved, that all those that come out of England, shall be at their first landing quartered, that the wearisomnesse of the Sea may be refreshed in this pleasing part of the country." In this opinion of the attractiveness of Kecoughtan, William Strachey, Gate's Secretary concurred: "It is an ample and faire countrie indeed \*\*\*\*\* and is a delicate and necessary seate for a citty or chief fortification."

Southampton River, now known as Hampton River, was named in honor of Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, President of the Virginia Company of London from 1620 to 1625, and his name was also given to the splendid body of water into which the rivulet entered "Southampton (Hampton) Roads." In the autumn following (1610) Delaware withdrew the guards at these two forts, and sent the men on a fruitless expedition to the falls of James River to search for gold, but after his depauration in 1611, from Virginia, Sir Thomas Dale restored the settlement.

Fort Henry probably occupied the site of the Kecough-

tan village that stood in a field of 100 acres on the "Strawberry Bank," having John's Creek as its eastern boundary. Its situation was thus identical with that of the present Soldiers' Home. A mile further east was Fort Charles. Each of these forts, in 1613, had fifteen soldiers, but no ordnance; and, in 1614, Captain George Webb was the principal commander of both. In the latter year, Hamor describes them as "goodly seats and much corn about them, abounding with the commodities of fish, fowle, Deere and fruits, whereby the men lived there with halfe that maintenance out of the store which in other places is allowed." In 1616, John Rolfe reported that there were at Kecoughtan twenty-one men including Captain Webb, and of the number Mr. William Mease was minister and eleven were farmers, who maintained themselves.

The year 1619 saw great changes made in the government of Virginia. Hitherto the settlers were only soldiers and martial law prevailed. Now the free laws of England were proclaimed, and to every man was assigned a certain area of land. On July 30, a general assembly met at Jamestown, according to the summons of the governor, in which William Tucker and William Capps, prominent colonists, were the representatives for Kecoughtan. Four corporations were established to include all the settlements. The region from the bay on both sides of the river, to Chuckatuck on the south side and to Skiffe's Creek on the North side constituted Elizabeth City Corporation, a name preferred by the inhabitants to the heathen name of Kecoughtan and bestowed in honor of King James' daughter Elizabeth, the Queen of Bohemia. In pursuance of the command of the London Company to set aside certain areas in each corporation for public uses, the government appropriated for Elizabeth City the land from the mouth of Hampton River to the Bay. Three thousand acres were reserved for the Company's own use; 1500 acres for the common use, and 100 acres for a glebe. Tenants were placed upon these lands for the public benefit. Of this stretch of country the portion from Hampton River to the beginning of the modern Mill Creek was called "Strawberry Bank," a name suggestive of the abundant growth of a luscious berry well known to a Virginia table; and the portion along Mill Creek



300 acres, was known as "Buck Roe," after a place in England of that name.

In 1620, the company sent some Frenchmen to Buck Roe to teach the colonists how to plant mulberry trees and grape vines, raise silkworms, and make wine. They were selected by John Bonnell, silkworm raiser to the King at Oakland, from Languedock in France, and among them were Anthony Bonnell<sup>1</sup>, Elias La Guard<sup>2</sup>, James Bonnell, Peter Arundell and David Poole.

In 1621, Capt. Thomas Newce from Newce's Town in Ireland came over as manager of the Company's lands in the different corporations, was made a member of the Virginia council, and given six hundred acres at Fort Henry for his support.

At this time one of the ministers of Elizabeth City was Jonas Stockton, son of William Stockton, parson of Barks-well, County Warwick, England; and in May, 1621, he wrote a letter regarding the treacherous character of the Indians and the futility of any attempt to convert them till "their Priests and Ancients" were put to death. He appears to have been the earliest exponent of the doctrine that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." March 22, 1622 occurred the massacre at which time 346 settlers out of a total of 1240 were slaughtered; and the warning of Mr. Stockton may have served the people of Elizabeth City to good purpose, for no one was killed there.

After the first news Captain Newce called all his neighbors together at his home, which he defended with three cannon, and took measure not only for their relief, but built two houses and a "faire well of water mantled with brick" for the reception of immigrants daily expected from England; and, forseeing the famine that must necessarily ensue, caused a large crop of corn to be planted around the fort. We are told that in all these works the captain acted the part of a sawyer, carpenter and laborer, but met with many difficulties. In the latter part of June Governor Wyatt, accompanied by his council and many other gentlemen, spent three or four days with him and ate up the crop of corn near the fort, before the ears were half grown. However, Captain Newce, sick and weak as he was, never tired of well

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently anglicised to "Bonny". <sup>2</sup> Subsequently anglicised "Ellegood."

doing; but when all was spent and the colonists had to live on crabs and oysters, he distributed among them, as he saw occasion, a little milk and rice which he still had left, and behaved with such "tenderness and care" that he obtained the reputation of being the best commander in Virginia.

September 9, 1622, his men were attacked at their labors by the Indians, which was their first assault since the massacre; and four men were slain. The Captain, though extremely sick, sallied forth, but the Indians hid in the corn-fields at night and escaped without any loss. About this time Samuel Collier, who had come, as a boy, to Virginia and was very useful as Indian interpreter, was accidentally killed by a sentinel; and in the general neglect of agriculture that ensued the vineyards at Buck Roe were greatly "bruised" by the deer. Captain Newce died the next year (1623) and he was preceded to the grave by his brother Sir William Newce, who had come a very short time before as high marshal to Virginia. It was from these two Newce brothers that Newport News (Newport Newce) obtained its name, its early title being Point Hope, as appears from Smith's map of Virginia.

### **The Development of Elizabeth City**

Captain William Tucker, a London merchant, succeeded Captain Newce as commander of Elizabeth City and as a member of the council of State, and in the revenge taken upon the savages by the government he played an important part in leading expeditions against them.

In February 1624, a census was taken of the inhabitants of the colony according to which it appeared that Elizabeth City Corporation had a population of 349. In June, the charter of the London Company was revoked, but though great fears were entertained, no attempt was made by the King to interfere with the plan of government established by the Company for the colony.

In 1625 another census of the colony was taken, and among the inhabitants of Elizabeth City Corporation the following may be mentioned: Residing at Newport News on a tract of 1300 acres, with his 19 servants was Mr. Daniel Gookin, who came like the Newces from Newce town in Ireland. On Hampton River and in its neighborhood were

Commander William Tucker, Captain Francis West, brother of Lord Delaware, John Downman, John Powell, Michael Willcox, Cornelius May, William Julian, Lieut. Thomas Purifoy, Ensign Thomas Willoughby, George Keith minister, Captain Nicholas Martian, Mr. Robert Salford, Francis Mason, Pharaoh Flinton, Lieutenant John Chisman, Mr. Edward Waters, Captain Francis Chamberlayne, Rev. Jonas Stockton, Mr. William Gany, Thomas Flint and Anthony Bonell.

In 1627, Rev. Mr. Stockton had the lease of 50 acres on the east side of Hampton River "within the Company's land at Elizabeth City," at the Indian House Thicket. It appears the irony of fate that an Indian school, the Hampton Institute, should now be seen near where once was an "Indian thicket," and the prophetic Stockton announced his conviction of the original depravity of the Indians.

As a result of the massacre, the Indians were driven far away from the settlements, and the colony, relieved from their presence, in a few years again put on a prosperous appearance. In 1628, we are told that there was a great plenty of everything in the colony and "peaches in abundance at Elizabeth City."

About 1630, Col. William Claiborne set up on the very site of the present town of Hampton a storehouse for trade with the Indians up Chesapeake Bay, and here he resided after being driven out of Kent Island by Lord Baltimore. He removed to West Point about 1661.

In 1632, the French vigneron at Buck Roe incurred the resentment of the general assembly by dropping into tobacco raising, and a law was passed inhibiting them from so doing on penalty of forfeiting their leases and having to quit the colony.

In February, 1634, Leonard Calvert and his immigrants stopped here on their way to found the great State of Maryland at St. Mary's.

The same year (1634) the colony was divided into eight counties, and "Elizabeth City" was given to one extending on both sides of Hampton Roads, but, in 1637, the south side was cut off and made into New Norfolk County, after which the limits of Elizabeth City County were pretty nearly as they exist at the present day. Till very recently however,



Newport News, which now lies wholly in Warwick County, lay partly in Elizabeth City County and partly in Warwick County.

### **The Strawberry Bank**

When, in 1637, Fort Henry was abandoned, the field of a hundred acres in which it stood, called "Fort Field," was granted to Captain Francis Hooke, Esq., of the Royal Navy, commander at Point Comfort and one of the council of State. It was described as "lying on the Strawberry Bank beginning at a well, known by the name of Plackett well, which is upon the Creek side, which runneth up by the Gate house west, and so to a place where a house stood where one Powell lived and from there directly to a spring in the banke of the creek right against the house of one Thomas Oldis east." A grant in 1648 to Major Richard Moryson, brother-in-law of Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, and one of Captain Hooke's successors in command at Point Comfort, is more definite. The land is here described as "lying south upon the Main River from the mouth of a creek commonly called Hooke's Creek alias John's Creek unto Sandy Point, bounded on the west side from the Sandy Point with a creek that parteth the land of Thomas Conier and the Glebe land from this land, bounded on the north with the land late belonging to Thomas Oldis gent. by marked trees to a tree near the bridge that leadeth to the dwelling house of said Oldis from (sic) to the mouth of said John's Creek, on the east side."

On the east of John's Creek was a tract of one hundred acres granted formerly to Captain Grayes for his personal adventure as "an ancient planter" and assigned by him in 1635 to Lieut. Thomas Purifoy, one of the council of State and a representative of the Purifoy, of Drayton, in Leicestershire; and by Purifoy, about 1667, assigned to Captain Francis Hooke. It became later the property of Thomas Oldis, a member of the House of Burgesses, who owned another tract of fifty acres adjoining easterly, which in 1622 appears to have been owned by Christopher Calthorpe, who came to Virginia that year. This last was second son of Christopher Calthorpe, Esq., of Norfolk County, England, and grandson of Sir Thomas Calthorpe and Barbara Bacon his wife. In 1691, the whole 150 acres was devised

to Jacob Walker and George Walker, Jr., his brother, by Thomas Oldis, grandson of Sir Thomas Oldis.

In the grant of Purifoy, his land is described as "lying on a small creek dividing the same from the field called Fort Henry." In the grant to Capt. Hooke in 1637, the same land is described as "situated upon the Strawberry Bank, northward upon a creek next to the Fort Field, south upon the Main River, east upon Thomas Oldis his land and north-east upon John Neale his land."

Next to the lot, formerly Christopher Calthorpe's and afterwards Thomas Oldis, on the "Strawberry Bank," was a tract of fifty acres, leased in 1627 to Doctoris Christmas, assigned by him in 1628 to Lionel Rowleston, and assigned by Rowleston in 1630 to John Neale, merchant. At the east side of this land, on the shore about 100 poles or 500 yards east of John's Creek, was in 1648 the cedar stump of the "lookout-tree," where a sentinel watched the distant capes for approaching vessels. And near by was the "round mill" after which Mill Creek was named, its earlier title being Point Comfort Creek<sup>1</sup>.

In 1628, Lieut. Edward Waters, whose romantic career had begun in 1609, with the wreck of the "Sea Venture," and his discovery shortly after on the Bermuda Islands of a vast piece of ambergris worth three million dollars leased 100 acres adjoining westerly John Neale's tract. These two tracts, making 150 acres, or 165 acres as the surveys showed, became vested in George Downes and were long known as **Downes' Field**. On the east side was a marsh or gut called Thomas' Creek, still to be seen to the east of "Roseland," a residence, near the town of Phoebus.

This land is more than ordinarily interesting, because of a great ejectment suit, which started in 1699. It is stated that Downes' Field being deserted vested in the Colony, and it was, thereupon, in 1642, granted to Major Richard Moryson, one of Hooke's successors as commander of Point Comfort. A few years later the government granted to Mrs. Elizabeth Claiborne, wife of Col. William Claiborne, then treasurer of Virginia, seven hundred acres, extending along the water side four hundred poles, or two hundred chains,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William and Mary College Quarterly, IX, 90.

<sup>2</sup> The chain at this period was only two rods or poles; i. e. 31 feet.

embracing Downes' Field, and bounded on its west side by Thomas Oldis land, on its east side by Buck Roe and the land of Rev. William Wilkinson, who afterwards emigrated to Maryland and was the second Protestant minister of that province. Major Moryson's title descended to Samuel Selden, a lawyer, who came from England to Elizabeth City in 1699; and Mrs. Claiborne's right had at that time vested in Bertrand Servant, a prominent French immigrant. Suit was entered and continued for half a century involving successive claimants, including Col. Robert Beverley, James Galt, John George and other prominent citizens of Elizabeth City.

In 1622, James Nott, of Accomac, planter, patented at the mouth of Hampton River fifty acres of land, "bounded southerly by a creek, which parteth the same from the lands of Captain Francis West, and northerly upon the Glebe land, together with the house commonly called the Great Howse and all other howses." The purpose of Mr. Nott is expressed in the patent to be "to keep a howse of entertainment, whereby strangers and others may be well accommodated, with great ease to the inhabitants in those parts."

### **"Fox Hill," and "Little England"**

Fox Hill is mentioned as early as 1625, when Captain Raleigh Croshaw had five hundred acres between that place and York River. Harris' Creek is a very old name in the records, and so is Back River, meaning the river on the back of the plantations first settled. The old Pocosin, as its name signifies, meant in the Indian tongue, the low, marshy country on the York River between Back River and Pocosin River.

The point now known as "Little England" was patented about 1634 by William Capps, a prominent settler, and for over one hundred years was known as Capps' Point. By William Capps, King Charles sent over the memorable instructions in 1627 allowing a general assembly, which had been discontinued since the revocation of the charter in 1624. To Capps was also given the privilege of erecting salt works.

## The First Glebe and Church

At the head of John's Creek was the Glebe land, lying on the north side of the present trolley car line from Hampton to the town of Phoebus. A grant to Robert Partin, in 1637, locates his lease of 40 acres as "south on the Fort field, and north towards the church," and this was the same land as Thomas Conier's, which was described in the patent to Major Richard Moryson for Fort Field, as parted from the Glebe Land by a creek making in from Sandy Point (Soldier's Home Point.) It was in this church, in January, 1637, that Sir John Harvey, who had been expelled from the government, read his commission to be governor for the second time. There is an old graveyard on the property of the late Col. Thomas Tabb, which has been restored, inclosed and re-dedicated as the site of this original church<sup>1</sup>.

## The Free Schools

Four years before John Harvard bequeathed his estate to the college near Boston, Benjamin Syms, of Virginia, left the first legacy by a resident of the American Plantation for the promotion of education. By his will, made February 12, 1634-'35, he gave two hundred acres on the Poquosin, a small river which enters the Chesapeake Bay, a mile or less below the mouth of York River, with the milk and increase of eight cows, for the education and instruction of the children of the adjoining parishes of Elizabeth City and Kiquotan, "from Mary's Mount downward to the Poquosin river." The money arising from the first increase of the cattle was to be used to build a schoolhouse, and the profits from the subsequent sales of cattle to support the teacher. This Benjamin Syms was born in 1590, and in 1623 was living at "Basse's Choice," in what was subsequently known as Isle of Wight county. In 1624, at this point, died a Margaret Syms. In 1629 Thomas Warnet, a leading merchant of Jamestown, bequeathed Benjamin Syms a weeding hoe. Syms was evidently an honest, religious, and childless planter.

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<sup>1</sup> Tyler, *Cradle of the Republic*, 248. Recent excavations confirm this conjecture. They disclosed the foundations of a building in the graveyard, which were of cobblestone showing that the superstructure was of wood.

In March 1642-'43 the Virginia Assembly gave a solemn sanction to Syms' will in the following words: "Be it enacted and confirmed, upon consideration had of the godly disposition and good intent of Benjamin Syms deceased, in founding by his last will and testament a free school in Elizabeth county, for the encouragement of all other in like pious performances, that the said will and testament with all donations therein contained concerning the free school and the situation thereof in the said county, and the land appertaining to the same, shall be confirmed according to the godly intent of the said testator, without any alienation or conversion thereof to any place or county." In 1647, a few years later, we hear from an early writer that the school was in operation and the number of kine greatly increased: "I may not forget to tell you," he writes, "we have a free school, with two hundred acres of land, a fine house upon it, forty milch kine and other accommodations. The benefactor deserveth perpetual mention, Mr. Benjamin Syms, worthy to be chronicled. Other petty schools we have."

On June 5th, 1638, Thomas Eaton patented 600 acres of land the west side of the head of Back River. By his deed, dated September 19, 1659, he conveyed 500 acres of this land with all the houses upon it, two negroes, 12 cows and two bulls, twenty hogs, and some household furniture, for the maintenance of an able schoolmaster to educate and teach the children born within the county of Elizabeth City.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen that after Captain Ratcliffe's death, Captain James Davis had command of Algernourne Fort, and in 1614 the fort was described as a stockade "without stone or brick," containing 50 persons, men, women and boys, and protected by seven pieces of artillery; two of thirty-five "quintales," and the other thirty, twenty and eighteen all of iron.

After Percy's departure for England, in April, 1612, the name Algernourne Fort was discontinued; and the place, for many years afterwards, was referred to as "Point Comfort Fort."

In 1632, the fort having fallen in disuse, was rebuilt by Captain Samuel Mathews, afterwards governor, and fur-

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<sup>1</sup> William and Mary College Quarterly, VI, 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid VI., 74; XI., 19.



nished with a guard of eight men; and Captain Francis Pott, brother of Governor John Pott, of the ancient family of the Potts of Harrop, in Yorkshire, was made commander, and continued such till he was removed by Sir John Harvey in 1635.

In that year (1635) Francis Hooke, of the Royal Navy, "an old servant of King Charles," was put in command.

He died in 1637, and Captain Christopher Wormley, who had been governor of Tortugas, was for a short time in charge.

Then, in 1639, succeeded Richard Moryson, son of Sir Richard Moryson, and brother-in-law of the noble cavalier, Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, who married Letitia Moryson.

In 1641, he returned to England, and left his brother, Lieutenant Robert Moryson, in charge of the fort.

In 1649, Major Francis Moryson, another brother, who had served King Charles in the wars with the Parliament and came to Virginia with Colonel Henry Norwood, Colonel Mainwaring Hammond and other cavaliers was appointed by Sir William Berkley, captain of the fort. After Major Moryson, his nephew, Colonel Charles Moryson, son of Richard Moryson, about 1664, succeeded to the command.

For the support of the Captain, what were known as "castle duties" were stablished in 1632, consisting, at first of "a barrel of powder and ten iron shot" required of every ship; and the Captain kept a register of all arrivals.

By 1665, the fort was entirely out of repair, and the general assembly in obedience to orders from the king appointed Captain William Bassett to build a new fort, but the council constituted Col. Miles Cary and his son Thomas, as Bassette lived too remote. Before the work was finished, however, the great storm of 1667 washed away the very foundations, and Col. Cary lost his life fighting the Dutch, who made an attack the same year, and burnt the English shipping at the mouth of the river. Then the king sent new orders to restore the fort, but the assembly, who had very reluctantly obeyed in the first instance, now instead of doing what the king required, ordered five forts to be built at five other places, viz: Nansemond, Jamestown, Tindall's Point, Corotoman and Yeocomoco. As an excuse of this action they asserted in the preamble to their act the inefficiency of a fort at Point Comfort and the great difficulty of getting

material to build a fort there. Of course, when the Dutch came in 1673, there was nothing to prevent their operations at the mouth of the river, and the shipping had the misfortune of 1667 repeated upon them.

The fort seems to have been discontinued for many years after this.

### **The Second Church, 1667**

About 1667, a new church was built on the west of Hampton (at a place lately known as "Pembroke Farm"), and that year a burial took place in the "old church" at Kecoughtan, and another at the "new church". This second church like the first, has long since disappeared, but its foundations may be traced and the site with the adjoining land consisting of nine acres still belongs to the parish. Here are a few tombstones of black marble, which still retain their position over the graves. They designate the resting places of John Neville, Vice-Admiral in the British Navy, who died August 17, 1697, aged 53 years; Thomas Curle, of Sussex County, England, who died May 30, 1700, aged 60 years; Peter Heyman, Collector of his Majesty's customs, who died April 29, 1700, and Rev. Andrew Thompson, born at Stoneblue, Scotland, and died September 1, 1719, aged 45.

The list of ministers who preached at Elizabeth City, during the 18th Century, as far as preserved, is as follows: William Mease, 1610-1620; George Keith, 1624; James Fenton, died Sept. 5, 1624; Jonas Stockton, 1624; William Wilkinson, 1644; Philip Mallory, 1644-1661; Rev. Justinian Aylmer, 1667; Jeremiah Taylor, 1677; John Page, 1677-1687; James Wallace, 1692-1712.

### **The First Court House**

Probably the first Court House for Elizabeth City County was near the site of the first church, and in 1699 Walter Bayley was paid 400 pounds of tobacco "for pulling down the old church and setting up benches in the Court House." The church at Pembroke farm now became the exclusive church for Elizabeth City Parish.

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<sup>1</sup> Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers and families of Virginia*, I., 1129.

## The Schools of Symms and Eaton

In 1670, James Ranson, of the county of Gloucester, gent., deeded to Abraham Savoy 50 acres on Old Poquoson River, "extending its breadth upon the school land (Sym's) on one side."

The schools of Symms and Eaton were undoubtedly in operation at the time when Berkeley uttered his much-quoted remark, in 1971, about free schools in Virginia.

In the oldest record book of the county now preserved (1689-'99) there are the following references to the schools of Benjamin Symms and Thomas Eaton, 19 Xber, 1692.—Whereas Mr. Ebenezer Taylor, late schoolmaster of Eaton's free-school, his time being expired & having had ye Benefitt & pquisetts thereof, it is thought reasonable yt a negroe woman belonging to ye sd school should be cloathed at ye charges of ye sd schoolmaster, she being almost naked. It is therefore ordered yt ye said Taylor doe wthin fourteen days next pride and deliver unto Mr. Henry Royall, one of ye ffeoffees, one new cotton wastcoate and pettycoate, 3 yards of good new canvis for a shift, one pare of new shoes & stockings & alsoe 3 Barrels of sound Indian Corn for ye said negroes use wth costs als exon."

Nov. 20, 1693.—"It is ordered yt Robert Crook Schoolmaster of Symmes School be allowed and paid for his charges in repairing ye school House two old cowes in lieu thereof.

May 20, 1695.—"It is ordered that a negroe Joan belonging to Eaton's free school by reason of age for ye future be free from paying Levyes and what crops she makes of Corne, Tobacco or Pulse, yt shee keepe ye same to her owne use for her maintenance."

18 Nov. 1697.—"Mr. George Eland with consent of this court is elected Schoolmaster of Eaton's free school & he to continue in place as he shall be approved of from year to year Teaching all such children in English and grammar learnings as shall be sent to him yt are belonging to this county, and he to have all such pquisites as is belonging to ye sd schoole."

19 June, 1699.—"Upon ye petition of William Williams wee doe hereby give, grant, possess, and confirm unto the said Williams & his heirs &c all that plantation or tract of



land whereon John Tams lately lived, belonging to Eaton's free-school land, being part thereof, beginning from Tony Kings along ye Dam side & extending in breadth Eastward as far as the next swamp or branch of ye sd dams and soe into ye woods as far as ye head lyne (the term is stated to be 21 years and the consideration that Williams should build or cause to be built one substantial thirty-foot dwelling house, and plant one hundred apple trees at usual distances, and keep the same well trimmed and fenced, and pay yearly 200 lbs. of tobacco "unto such pson as the same in right shall belong or apptayn, and at ye expiracon of ye sd time the said Williams should deliver up the said plantation and houses tenantable.")

### Officers, 1680-1699.

In 1680, the following gentlemen were justices of the county court: Col. Charles Moryson, Capt. Anthony Armistead, Mr. Bertrand Servant, Mr. Thomas Hollier, Mr. Baldwin Sheppard, Mr. Edward Myhill, Major Matthew Wakelin, Mr. Thomas Jarvis, Mr. Augustine Moore, Mr. Thomas Wythe, Mr. William Wilson. During the same year the officers in the militia were: Col. Charles Moryson, Major Matthew Wakelin, Capt. Anthony Armistead (horse).

The following composed the county bench in 1699: William Wilson, Anthony Armistead, Pasco Curle, William Lowry, Thomas Harwood, Augustine Moore, Coleman Brough, Thomas Curle, Mathew Watts, John Minson, Walter Bayley. Charles Jenings was clerk this year and Coleman Brough was sheriff.

The following is a partial list of the members of the House of Burgesses elected from Elizabeth City County during th 17th century: 1619, Captain William Tucker, William Capps; 1623-'24, William Tucker, Jaboz Whittaker; 1629, Lieutenant George Thompson, William English; 1629-'30, the upper parts of Elizabeth City, Capt. Thomas Willoughby, William Kempe, Thomas Hayrick; the lower part of Elizabeth City, Capt. Thomas Purifoy, Adam Thoroughgood, Lancelot Barnes; 1631-'32, Waters' Creek and upper part of Elizabeth City, Capt. Thomas Willoughby; the lower part of Elizabeth City, George Downes; 1632, the upper parish of Elizabeth City, Capt. Thomas Willoughby, (absent)

Henry Seawell, John Sipsey; the lower part of Elizabeth City, Adam Thoroughgood, William English, George Downes; 1632-'33, the upper parts of Elizabeth City, William English, John Arundel; the lower parts of Elizabeth City, William English, John Arundel; 1639, Elizabeth City County, Thomas Oldis, Mr. Strafferton; 1641, Mr. John Branch, Mr. Flo. Payne; 1642, John Neale, Edward Hill; 1642-'43, John Branch, John Hoddin; 1644, Lieutenant William Worlich, John Hoddin; 1644-'45, Capt. Leonard Yeo, Capt. Christopher Caulthropp, Arthur Price; 1645, Capt. Leonard Yeo, John Chandler; 1646, John Robbins, Hen. Batt; 1652, Peter Ransone, John Sheppard; 1653, John Sheppard, Thomas Thornbury, Major William Worlich, 1655-'56, Peter Ashton; 1657-'58, Major William (Worlich), John Powell; 1658-'59, William Batte, Florentine Payne; 1659-'60, Lt. Col. Wm. Worlich, Capt. John Powell; 1663, Capt. John Powell, Colonel Leonard Yeo; 1666, Col. Leonard Yeo, Captain John Powell; 1676-'77, Betrand Servant, Anthony Armistead; 1685, William Wilson; 1688, William Wilson, Thomas Allamby; 1692-'93, Capt. Willis Wilson, Capt. William Armistead; 1696, Capt. Anthony Armistead, William Wilson, Matthew Watts.

### **Founding of Hampton, 1680**

We have seen that in 1630 Col. Claiborne obtained a patent for 150 acres at the present site of Hampton. In 1680, this land had become the property of a ship captain named Thomas Jarvis, who married Elizabeth Duke. She was the daughter of Sir Edward Duke and widow of Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., who has lent his name to one of the most romantic rebellions in history. The same year (1680) the General Assembly passed an act condemning fifty acres, in each of the counties, for towns, to be centers of trade and sole places of import and export. For Elizabeth City, the area selected was a part of Captain Thomas Jarvis' property, which was vested in trustees or feoffees, and divided into half acre lots. The limitations of the act, however, were distasteful to both merchants in England and planters in Virginia, and the act was soon suspended by the government, though several persons bought lots and built houses at the new town.

In 1691, the act was revived, and the town for Eliza-

both City County was decreed to be built on "the west side of Hampton River, on the land of Mr. William Wilson, lately belonging unto Mr. Thomas Jarvis, deceased, the plantation where he late lived, and the place appointed by a former law and several dwelling houses and warehouses already built." Under this act the trustees or feoffees for the sale of lots were Thomas Allamby, William Marshall and Pascho Curle.

Again the limitations caused the suspension of the act, but in 1699 another act revived the law so far as it applied to the sale of lots and the soundness of their tenure.

In 1694, the trustees sold a half-acre lot for 178 pounds of tobacco to Thomas Waterson with the usual condition of building, and the same year, one of the lots, which had been previously disposed of, was transferred to a purchaser for 7 pounds sterling. It had been presumably built upon, for in 1696, when Henry Royal sold to George Walker one of the lots for 6 pds. sterling, the price was cut down from 6 pds. to 5 pds. 15 shillings, because the condition of building had not been fulfilled properly. In this year no less than five persons—John Knox, William Hudson, Thomas Skinner, John Bright and Coleman Brough—were granted licenses to keep ordinary at Hampton Town.

Twenty-six lots were soon sold, and in 1698 Hampton was a place of sufficient importance to require the appointment of a special constable. The main street was known as Queen Street. It was made the residence of the pilots for James River and the headquarters of the custom district, known as the lower District of James River. In 1695 John Minson was commissioned pilot and about the same time Peter Heyman, grandson of Sir Peter Heyman, of Summerfield, County York, England, was commissioned collector.

These were royal times for pirate vessels, which scoured the coast and rendered sea voyages very hazardous. In 1700 one of the pirates ventured within the capes and engaged in a battle with the fifth class man-of-war **Shoreham**. The pirate was beaten, but among the killed was Peter Heyman, the collector, who was shot down on the quarter deck of the **Shoreman** by the side of Col. Francis Nicholson, the governor. Heyman was buried in the churchyard at the Pembroke Farm, and a stone was placed over his grave at

the expense of the governor. In 1710 George Luke was collector, and in 1722, Thomas Michell.

In 1704, Hampton received a visit from the celebrated preacher, George Keith, who was, it is believed, a grandson of the former minister of that name for Elizabeth City County. He was a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, a Master of Arts, and had held high position among the Quakers of Pennsylvania. Factional strife broke out among them, because of his extreme views on the doctrine of Quaker passivity, and, being finally deserted by his friends, he broke with his faith and returned to the church of England. In 1702, he was sent to America as a missionary from "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel." After spending two years in the northern colonies, where he converted many Quakers, he visited Hampton with another minister, Mr. Talbot. There is this entry in his Journal: "Mr. Talbot preached at Kirketan; we stayed there about ten days at my daughter's house at Kirketan, by James River; she is fully come off from the Quakers, and is a zealous member of the church of England, and brings up her children, so many of them as are capable through age, in the Christian religion, praised be God for it." The daughter referred to in this extract was Anne Keith, wife of George Walker, the pilot for James River, who lived on the "Strawberry Bank" near Mill Creek. She was grandmother of the celebrated Jurist and Statesman, George Wythe.

In 1705, Hampton had a visit from another prominent Pennsylvania Quaker, Thomas Story, famous for his erudition and ability as a lawyer. In his Journal may be read the following item: "On the 29th (April) we went to Kiequotan, where we had a meeting at our friend, George Walker's house, to which came Col. Brown, one of the provincial council and several commanders of ships and others of note, who were generally well satisfied with the meeting. George Walker's wife is one of George Keith's daughters and follows him in his apostacy and enmity."

Domestic difficulties arose between George Walker and his wife, and in 1708 she appealed to the Council of State, complaining that "George Walker, her husband, violently restrained her and her children from going to church to attend the worship of God according to the established religion." After hearing both sides, the Council ordered:

“That she, the said Anne, ought to enjoy the free exercise of her religion, and that her husband ought not to restrain her from going to church; and as to that part of the petition relating to the children, it not appearing of what age these children are, nor how far they are capable of choosing a religion for themselves, this board do not think proper to determine anything in that matter at this time.” In this case the Quaker, whose sect preached freedom of religion and the government, which usually restricted it, seemed to change sides.

July 1, 1715, permission was granted by Alexander Spottswood, the governor, for the justices to remove their old court house and build a new one for Hampton Town, and land was purchased from Captain William Boswell for the purpose. At this time Governor Spottswood wrote the following letter:

Williamsburgh, July the 1st, 1715.

Mr. John Holloway this Day applied to me in Behalfe of the justices of Elizabeth City County for leave to build Their new Court House att Hampton, I Doe approve of the Removall and shall accordingly order the Sheriff to attend the Court there so soon as the House shall be fitt for the Reception of the Justices.

A. Spottswood.

Recorded by order of Court.

Teste Cha. Jenings, Cl. Cur.

When John Fontaine visited Hampton in 1716, it was a place of 100 houses and had the greatest business in Virginia. All the men-of-war lay before this arm of the river, and the inhabitants drove a great trade with New York and Pennsylvania.

Pirates still infested the coast and one Edward Teach, otherwise known as Blackbeard, was notorious. He had his headquarters in Pamlico Sound, North Carolina, from which he sailed from time to time on piratic expeditions. In 1717, Governor Spotswood sent Captain Henry Maynard from Hampton after him, with two small sloops. On November 21, a bloody battle was fought, and Blackbeard was shot down by Maynard, and fourteen of his confederates were captured. Maynard returned in triumph to Hampton,



swinging Blackbeard's head from his bowsprit. He set it up at the mouth of Hampton River, and the point is still known as Blackbeard's Point. Maynard's prisoners were tried and hanged at Williamsburg.

Among the prominent citizens of Hampton and Elizabeth City, about 1720, were Anthony Armistead, Thomas Wythe, Joshua Curle, Samuel Sweeney, Joseph Bannister, John Selden, Joseph Selden, James Ricketts, Simon Hollier, John Lowry, Thomas Tabb, John Brodie, Alexander McKenzie, Wilson Cary, James Wallace, and John Smith. The latter (John Smith) died in 1723, and his inventory is particularly rich. Among other items is the following:

"Five thousand of English brick at 12 shillings per thousand." It appears that there were two kinds of building brick made in the colony—brick made of the size prescribed in English statute, called "English brick" and brick made according to the Dutch statute, called "Dutch brick." Very little brick was imported into the colony, except as ballast and there is no evidence that any houses in Virginia were built of imported brick.

### **The Third Church**

About this time the church at Pembroke Farm had become ruinous, and, on June 17, 1727, Mr. Jacob Walker and Mr. John Lowry were appointed by the court of Elizabeth City to lay off and value an acre and a half of ground on Queen's Street, joining upon Mr. Boswell's lots, for building the church thereon. The same day, Mr. Henry Cary, by order of the minister, church wardens and the court, was permitted to take wood, "at the rate of six pence per load to burn bricks for the church, from the School land." But it seems that a portion of the people of the parish did not desire to remove from the old quarters, and they appealed the matter to the governor and council. They heard the complaint and decided, October 27, 1727, that "the new church should be built in Hampton Town as the most convenient place in the said parish."

In 1728, Samuel Bownas, a Quaker preacher, told of a visit to Hampton in the following language: "George Walker was very kind, invited us to stay at his house which we did four nights, and had a meeting or two in his house,

his wife being more loving than I expected. She was George Keith's daughter, and in her younger days showed great dissatisfaction with Friends, but after her father's death the edge of that bitterness abated, and her husband was very loving and hearty to Friends, frequently having meetings at his house." Bownas stayed at Hampton eleven day, and left there May 29, 1728.

In 1727, Mr. William Hopkins was deputy attorney for the King. In 1728, Mr. John Markland was recommended to be the King's deputy attorney. The same year Alexander McKenzie was commissioned to be lieutenant colonel of the militia, and Wilson Cary, major.

### **Learning in Elizabeth City County**

More than the usual attention was paid to learning in Elizabeth City. The court and vestry were particularly vigilant in seeing that all poor children were bound to useful trades and taught by their employers to read and write. The following may be given as examples:

16 June 1725. Upon the petition of Ann Grove setting forth that James Servant had not learned her son, Armistead House, to read, write and cipher according to his agreement when he took him by Indenture, The court are of opinion that the said Indenture is void and of no effect and it is, therefore, considered that the said Armistead House be discharged from the service of his late master James Servant.

17 Nov. 1723. Thomas Wilson and Mary Randall came into Court and made oath that Thomas Davis was 14 years of age the 24th October Last who not having Estate sufficient to maintain him, It is Ordered that he be bound an apprentice to Nicholson Parker till he attain the age of twenty-one years, who is to teach him the trade of Shoemaker as also to have him taught to read and write. It is further ordered that they sign Indentures before any justice of this county.

15 Dec. 1725. Francis Berry is bound apprentice to Mathew Small til he is of Age; the said Small obliges himself to learn him the trade of a Taylor and to read and write. The Boy is eleven years of age.

16 Febry 1725. John Hicks apprenticed to George Minson to learn to read & write & the trade of a carpenter.

### Ministers

The succession of ministers were as follows: After the death of Rev. James Wallace, in 1702, Andrew Thompson became rector of Elizabeth City parish and continued till his death in 1714. He was succeeded by Rev. James Falconer, who came to Virginia in 1718. His report to the Bishop of London, in 1724, is that "his parish is fifty miles in circumference with three hundred and fifty families; that the owners were careful to instruct the young negro children and bring them to baptism; that service is performed every Sunday and that most of the parishioners attend; that there are about one hundred communicants; that his salary was about sixty-five pounds; that there were two public schools in the parish, whereof John Mason and Abram Paris are teachers, and a good private school kept by Mr. William Fife, in which besides reading, arithmetic and writing, Latin and Greek were taught.

### The Free Schools in 1720-1776

The following notice appears in regard to the free schools of Syms and Eaton:

Aug. 17, 1720.—Upon complt made by Henry Irvin gent agt Jno Curle about Eaton's free schoole land of waste made of the timbers, it is ordered that the Clk. bring sd Eaton's will and Deed to next court concerning the premises and a copy of the vestry ordr whereby Curle hath the land granted to him.

Nov. 17, 1725.—Upon the motion of William Tucker setting forth that he is willing to take the school land and provide a schoolmaster, it is ordered that the said Tucker have possession of the said land with this provisio and condition, that he constantly keep and provide a schoolmaster to teach children in said land.

Dec. 18, 1728.—Ordered that the quit rents due for the school land according to the rent rolls thereof be paid out of the money arising from the sale of wood from the said land to Henry Cary.



It appears that in course of time much pecuniary loss befell both schools from trespassers, who cut down the timber, and from tenants who failed to pay rents.

To put Eaton's school on a better footing, the General Assembly thought proper, in 1730, to give authority for leasing the land in parcels, and when by reason of the trustees not being incorporated by the act, some doubt was again started as to the validity of their authority to punish trespassers and delinquents and called arrearages of rent, the Legislature incorporated the trustees of both schools, under the name, in the one case (1759), of "The Trustees and Governors of Eaton's Charity School," and in the other (1753), under that of "The Trustees and Governors of Syms' Free School."

The trustees were empowered to have perpetual succession; to use a corporate seal; to select and remove the master, who, before selection, was to be approved by the minister and by the government; to visit the school; to order, reform, and redress all abuses; and to lease the school lands and the cattle thereon for a period not exceeding twenty-one years.

In 1765 there was a lease of tract No. 1, surveyed by Robert Lucas in 1759, and containing 75 acres, the consideration being an annual rent of 4 pounds 10s., the building a dwelling 28 feet long by 16 feet broad, pitch 9 feet, to be covered with good heart pine or cypress and two rooms above and two below, lathed and plastered, and doors floors and windows of good plank, as also an orchard of 100 Grixon (?) apple trees, which is to be kept fenced and secure against all damage.

By an advertisement in the **Virginia Gazette** we learn that in 1752 the perquisites of Syms' school was 31 pounds annually. The act of 1759 testified to the good work performed by the Eaton school, to which, in addition to the proper objects of charity, "a great number of children" had been admitted free "who were able to pay for their own education."

## Population

The number of tithables in Elizabeth City County, in 1748, was 1078, which was more than double what it was at the close of the preceding century. In 1759, the number was 1428, which showed a population of 4284.

In 1752 the list of the military officers for Elizabeth City County was as follows: Wilson Cary, County Lieutenant, John Hunter, Colonel, John Tabb, Major of Horse, Robert Armistead, Major of Foot. The whole militia consisted of one company of foot and two troops of horse. The captains according to the dates of their commissions were Cary Selden, captain of 100 men, Charles King, captain of a troop of 66 men, Westwood Armistead, captain of a troop of 60 men.

### The Fort at Point Comfort, 1727-1749

We have seen that the fort at Old Point Comfort was discontinued after 1667. In 1706 the whole point of land, containing about 120 acres being deserted, was patented by Robert Beverley. Five years later Governor Spotswood advised that the fort be rebuilt to afford a retreat for ships, when pursued by privateers in time of war, or by pirates in time of peace; but it was not until 1727 that the Assembly seriously took up the proposition. When finished, which was not till after several years, it was mounted by twenty-two guns, and about 1736 Governor Gooch reported that: "no ship could pass it without running great risk." It was named Fort George, and was made of brick, each nine inches long by four wide and three thick. The exterior wall was sixteen feet distant from the interior one, and the former was twenty-seven inches thick and the latter sixteen inches. Then the two walls were connected by counter walls ten or twelve feet apart, forming cribs, which were probably filled with sand. During this time the fort was under the control of George Walker, "gunner and storekeeper."

It seems that the government built the work without asking the consent of the owner of the land, but in 1744 this difficulty was quieted by their giving William Beverley, son of Robert Beverley, then deceased, 165 pounds for his rights. Five years later another and more fatal difficulty assailed the fort.

In 1749, a hurricane, which has been described as most

terrific and disastrous, visited Virginia. The officer in command at Point Comfort was Captain Samuel Barron, ancestor of a line of naval heroes distinguished in three wars. The barracks in which he stayed were a long row of wooden buildings with brick chimneys, running up through the center of the roofs, and Captain Barron caused all his family with the officers and soldiers of the garrison, to muster on the second floor with all the weighty articles they could find; which, it was supposed, kept the houses firm on their foundations, and so preserved the lives of all concerned. The hurricane, however, entirely destroyed the walls of Fort George, and Captain Barron removed with his family to the upper part of Mill Creek, not far off, where he resided during the remainder of his life.<sup>1</sup>

In 1756, Governor Dinwiddie, commenting on the fort, observed: "It was built on a Sandy Bank; no care to drive the piles to make a Foundation; the Sea and wind beating against it has quite undermined it and dismantled all the Guns which now lie buried in the Sand." There is no evidence that the fort was ever restored, but as late as 1847 parts of its walls were seen and described.

The customs district, of which Hampton was the sole port of entry, included, on the north side of James River, all of the rivers and creeks from Hampton River to Archer's Hope Creek at Jamestown, and on the south side all the rivers and creeks from Cape Henry to Hog Island. The amount of shipping on the two sides was, however, very unequal, and the inhabitants of Norfolk complained, in 1735, that whereas the north side had only three ships, owned by Virginians, and no other vessels trading there, they of the south side had neither a collector nor a deputy collector, though that region swarmed with vessels owned by Virginians and West India and English merchants.

In 1769, died at Hampton Gabriel Cay, collector of customs. At this time Wilson Cary was naval collector. The residence of the latter was at "Ceeleys" midway between Hampton and Newport News.

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<sup>1</sup> Fort George, Virginia Hist. Register I., 23.

## **The Church Steeple and Bell**

In 1760, Alexander Kennedy devised land to the poor of Elizabeth City County, and the sum of 40 pds. sterling towards purchasing out of England a bell for the church of Elizabeth City Parish, provided "the vestry and church wardens will undertake a belfry within twelve months after my decease." A vestry book tells of the contracts awarded for building and painting the Belfry, and no doubt the bell was procured. It would seem as if the church had no bell previous to this time.

We continue the succession of ministers. In 1727, Rev. Mr. Falconer became a minister of Charles Parish in York County, whereupon, Rev. Thomas Peader "took the oath to his majesty's governor and signed the test." Not long after he was succeeded by Rev. William Fife, who taught the private school, already referred to. He continued minister till 1756, when he was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Warrington, who died in 1770. The Rev. William Selden, a graduate of William and Mary College, followed and continued until 1783.

### **List of the Burgesses from 1700-1776**

The following is a partial list of the members of the House of Burgesses from Hampton and Elizabeth City County from 1702 to 1776; 1702, William Wilson, William Armistead; 1710-1712, Nicholas Curle, William Armistead; 1714, William Armistead, Robert Armistead; 1718, Henry Jenkins, Thomas Wythe; 1720-1722, James Rickets, Anthony Armistead; 1723, James Rickets, Thomas Wythe; 1726, Robert Armistead, Thomas Wythe; 1736, 1738, 1740, 1742, 1745, 1747, 1748, 1749, 1752, 1753, 1754, 1755, 1756, 1757, 1758, William Westwood, Merritt Sweeney; 1758-1761, William Wager, John Tabb; 1761-1765, George Wythe, William Wager; 1765, 1766, 1768, 1769, George Wythe, Wilson Miles Cary; 1769-1771, James Wallace, Wilson Miles Cary; 1772-1774, 1775-1776, Henry King, Worlich Westwood.

## Hampton in the Revolution

At the time of the American Revolution the population of Hampton was probably about one thousand people. There, as elsewhere, the spirit of patriotic resistance had its home, and the following gentlemen chosen 23 of November, 1775, constituted the Committee of Safety for Elizabeth City and the town of Hampton: William Roscow Wilson Curle, Chairman, John Tabb, George Wray, John Allen, Miles King, Augustine Moore, Edward Cooper, Wilson Miles Cary, Westwood Armistead, George Booker, James Wallace Bayley, John Parsons, Henry King, Jacob Wray, John Jones, John King, Joseph Cooper, William Mallory, Simon Hollier, John Cary, Moseley Armistead. Robert Bright, Clerk.

The following gentlemen were members of the different revolutionary conventions: Conventions of March 20, 1775, July 17, 1775, Dec. 1, 1775, Henry King, Worlich Westwood; Convention of May 6, 1776, Wilson Miles Cary, Henry King.

After the rupture of Lord Dunmore, the last royal governor of Virginia, with the House of Burgesses, the former retired to Norfolk, which he made his headquarters for military operations. Hampton became the scene of the first real collision in Virginia. Runaway slaves resorted to Lord Dunmore's ships and the British sailors created annoyance by landing on the shores at night and carrying off sheep and other live stock belonging to the inhabitants near the water. On the second of September, 1775, a sloop commanded by Captain Mathew Squires, who was charged with being a prime instigator in these robberies, was driven by a storm on the shore near Hampton. The officers and sailors barely escaped with their lives, and some of them were entertained at the house of one Finn, to whom they presented the vessel and damaged stores as a reward for his hospitality. Captain Squires was separated from his people and wandered about all night in the storm, but managed to escape in the morning to the friendly protection of Lord Dunmore's fleet. On the 10th Captain Squires made a demand on the committee of the town of Hampton for the return of the stores, which was answered by a promise to return the same if he would deliver up a negro slave belong-

ing to Mr. Henry King and cease his nocturnal depredations. Captain Squires threatened violence, and his threat reaching Williamsburg, one hundred men under the command of James Innis, Captain of the Williamsburg Guard, marched from that place to the protection of Hampton.

Captain Squires, however, did not immediately attempt to execute his threat, and Captain Innis and his troops after receiving the thanks of the Hampton Committee, soon returned to Williamsburg, but it was thought proper to replace them soon after by a like number of men under the command of Major Francis Eppes.

Captain Squires, however, did not relinquish his desire for revenge, and on October 24 appeared in Hampton River with six armed tenders sent by Dunmore, and a message was received at Hampton that he would that day land and burn the town. The Virginia troops, who were then in the vicinity, consisting of a company of regulars under Captain George Nicholas, a company of minute men, and a small body of militia, made the best disposition they could to prevent their landing.

The British, accordingly, attempted to land, but were retarded by some boats sunk across the channel for that purpose.

Squires then commanded a furious cannonade, and under that cover sent armed men in boats to make a landing, but the Virginians sent so many death shots that the boats were obliged to return. In the morning, Col. William Woodford arrived from Williamsburg with reinforcements, and when the enemy resumed their cannonade of the town, his men replied with a hot fire, which soon spread terror among the British. Unable to withstand such a valiant attack, the British commander ordered the cables to be slipped and the vessels to retreat, but before the fleet could get away, two of the vessels were captured. The victory was complete. Not a single Virginian was killed.

Many of the buildings in Hampton, including the church, were injured by the fire of the British, and one house, Mr. George Cooper's, was burned. Not long after this incident, when the Declaration of Independence was promulgated, it is said that lightning struck the steeple of the church and hurled to the ground the insignia of royalty which adorned it.



## The Heroes of Hampton Town

During this war several of the inhabitants of Hampton acquired credit and renown. Prominent among these in political life was George Wythe, son of Thomas Wythe and Margaret Walker, who attained almost equal distinction as a statesman, a jurist, and as an interpreter of the law, being the preceptor of both Jefferson and Marshall. The brick house in which he was born, on Back River, is still standing. William Roscow Wilson Curle was not only chairman of the County Committee of Safety, and Colonel of the County Militia, but one of the first judges of the Admiralty Court of the new Commonwealth. Miles King, afterwards mayor of Norfolk, also performed important military services. As a resort for seafaring men, it furnished both sailors and officers to the gallant State Navy. Among the most famous of these was Captain Joseph Meredith, who commanded the privateer **La Fayette**, George Hope, who superintended the construction of gunboats at Warwick near Richmond, Capt. William Cunningham, who was first lieutenant of the schooner **Liberty**, and afterwards prominent in procuring munitions of war from the West Indies, and Captain Richard Barron and Captain James Barron, sons of Captain Samuel Barron, who commanded Fort George in 1749.

Virginia had, at one period of the war, as many as seventy vessels including frigates, brigs, brigantines, schooners, sloops, galleys, armed pilot boats and barges; and they rendered great service to the American cause. They not only effectually prevented the incursions of bands of plundering Tories on the bay, but were useful in making prizes of British merchantmen and in exporting tobacco and other produce, and exchanging their cargoes in the West Indies for arms and military stores. Smollet, in his continuation of Hume's **History of England**, says that, "by the export of tobacco from the Chesapeake the credit of the colonies was chiefly, if not wholly supported," and by the inland navigation of that bay, large quantities of provisions were conveyed to the middle colonies for the subsistence of the **American armies**."

Many of these small vessels were built at South Quay, Hampton, which became headquarters of the Virginia Navy.



It was controlled by a board of naval commissioners, of whom Col. Thomas Whiting, of Hampton, was president. The largest ships carried thirty-two guns each, and one of them—the **Gloucester**—was a prison ship and was moored near Hampton on Elizabeth River. Only one of the Virginia ships survived the war—the famous **Liberty**—which figured in twenty gallant encounters.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the most distinguished of the naval officers was James Barron. He was the son of Captain Samuel Barron, and his wife, Jane Cooper, daughter of Philip Cooper. He was born at Fort George in 1749, and began sea life at a very early age. He was sent to sea at ten years in charge of Captain Barrington, who sailed in a fine ship belonging to London, a constant trader to James River. His first commission was over a small vessel belonging to Col. John Hunter, of Hampton, called the "Kickotan," in which he sailed for some time. On attaining his maturity he was made commander of a fine ship owned by Samuel Guest, a merchant of London. At the first dawn of the Revolution he was captain of a military company composed of the young sailors of Hampton, who were numerous at that time, and was engaged in the action with Captain Squires' party when he attacked the place in 1775.

After the navy of Virginia was organized, James Barron and his brother, Richard had commands at different times of the ships **Liberty** and **Patriot**.

In 1779, James Barron became senior officer and was placed in command of all the naval forces of the commonwealth. He performed many gallant naval exploits, but possibly nothing that he did was more important to the cause of the Revolution than his interception of a boat sent by Lord Dunmore in April, 1776, to Annapolis with dispatches for Governor Eden from Lord Dartmouth, the English Secretary of State, regarding the proposed expedition against the City of Charleston. James Barron then cruising in the Chesapeake, captured the boat and conveyed the papers, which discovered the whole plan of British operations to Williamsburg. The Charlestonians had warning in advance, and had time to concert a defence which foiled completely the formidable British attack under Sir Henry

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<sup>1</sup> The Virginian Navy of the Revolution.—**Southern Literary Messenger**, Richmond, Va., XXIV, I, 104, 210, 273.

Clinton and Sir Peter Parker. After the peace he continued in command of the only two vessels retained in the service for the protection of the revenue until the year 1787, when he died, leaving the services he had rendered to his country to survive after him.<sup>1</sup>

After the repulse of Captain Squires' force in 1775, there was no other attack made upon Hampton during the Revolution, but the waters and country in the vicinity were the scenes of conflict at each invasion of the British. In December, 1780, a fleet commanded by Benedict Arnold, sailed through the capes and captured some small vessels of the Virginia navy in Hampton Roads.

During their stay the shores of Elizabeth City and Warwick County were repeatedly visited by small parties of British troops bent on plunder and forage, who had skirmishes with the local militia. In these encounters, Col. Francis Mallory and his brother Edward, of Hampton, bore a conspicuous part. In March, 1781, Arnold sent Col. Dundas around to the York River with 200 men to surprise the American post at the Halfway House between Hampton and Yorktown. The post was deserted, however, and Dundas continued his march to Newport News, where he was to join the ships again. On the way he fell in with forty of the militia, commanded by Col. W. R. W. Curle and Col. Francis Mallory. They made a brave resistance, but were overwhelmed by numbers. Curle was taken prisoner, and Mallory fell pierced by numerous musket balls and bayonet thrusts.

In the summer of 1781 Lord Cornwallis took up his position at Portsmouth and his transports stationed in the Roads repeated their annoying depredations. When later in the year he removed to Yorktown, the Elizabeth City County militia participated in his capture, much to their own satisfaction and that of their friends and neighbors, who had been so tormented by him.

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<sup>1</sup> A Biographical Notice of Commodore Barron of the Navy of Virginia, *The Virginia Hist. Register* I, 23.

## The Later Barrons

Hampton, like all the seaports of Virginia, suffered very much from the results of American Independence. Its trade with the West Indies was cut off and the town made little advance for many years after the Revolution. It remained, however, the headquarters of the pilots of James River, who disbursed considerable money. It continued to give naval heroes to History, and among them may be mentioned the two sons of James Barron of the Revolution—James, the younger and Samuel, who both became commodores in the United States Navy and were conspicuous for their bravery and executive ability.

Samuel Barron, the oldest son, was born in the town of Hampton, September 25, 1765. He studied at a grammar school in Petersburg and at the Grammar school at William and Mary College. At fifteen years of age he went as midshipman on Board the frigate **Dragon** commanded by Captain Markham, and during the rest of the war, shared in both sea and land duty and was raised to the rank of captain. After the peace he was in the revenue service of the State until the adoption of the Federal constitution in 1788. He then engaged in the merchant service, but was soon employed by the government and in 1804 had command of the Mediterranean fleet sent to the relief of commodore Bainbridge and his companion then prisoners in Tripoli. He was taken ill, and was compelled to turn over his command to Commodore Rogers and returned to Virginia. He was put in command of the navy yard at Gosport, where he died Nov. 10, 1810.<sup>1</sup> His son, Samuel Barron, was born in 1802, and served also with great distinction in the United States Navy in all grades to captain; but, when the war broke out in 1861, he joined the Confederates, and was made Commodore, in which position he gave a good account of himself till the war was over and he returned to his home.

His brother, James Barron, was born in Hampton in the year 1768. He was too young to take any part in the Revolution, but after the peace was employed like his brother and father in the revenue service of the State. He

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<sup>1</sup> Commodore Samuel Barron, *Virginia Historical Register* III, 198.

subsequently followed the merchant line until the organization of the United States Navy when he entered the public service as lieutenant. In this grade he served with credit under Commodore Barry in the short war with the French Republic, on board the frigate **United States**, in which Stephen Decatur was midshipman. On account of his efficiency, he was raised to the rank of captain and given the command of that war ship. During Mr. Jefferson's administration the navy was placed on a peace establishment and most of the officers were discharged, but James Barron and his brother, Samuel, were two of the few retained. In 1804 he commanded the frigate **Essex**, one of the squadron of ten vessels sent to Tripoli under the command of his elder brother, Commodore Samuel Barron. In this service and various other commands he won much honor till a shadow was cast over his career by the affair, in 1808, of the **Leopard** and **Chesapeake**, when he was courtmartialed and relieved from command for five years for "neglecting on the probability of an engagement to clear his ship for action." This decision was a most unjust one, as the fault was not with Barron, but with the Navy department.

After the war of 1812 he was restored to the navy, over the protest of Stephen Decatur, who spoke of him in disparaging terms, which led, in 1820, to a challenge resulting in the death of Decatur and the wounding of Barron. After this Barron was in command of the Philadelphia Navy Yard and had the honor of receiving General La Fayette when he visited that place in 1824. He held command next at the Gosport Navy Yard and the naval asylum at Philadelphia, but at last on account of old age resigned and retired to Norfolk, where he died April 21, 1851, in the 83rd year of his age. His eldest daughter, Jane, married Wilton Hope and was mother of James Barron Hope, a distinguished Virginia poet and literateur.

### **Lewis Warrington**

Another of the naval heroes of Virginia was Commodore Lewis Warrington, who was the grandson of Rev. Thomas Warrington, minister of Hampton Church in 1770. He entered the United States navy in 1800 and served with great distinction. His most brilliant performance occurred

during the war of 1812, when commanding the **Peacock**, he engaged the British sloop of war **Epervier**, convoying a fleet of merchantmen. In the battle which ensued the **Epervier** was badly injured and her crew surrendered. On board of her there was found the sum of 118,000 pounds in specie. The **Epervier** was sent into Savannah under command of J. B. Nicholson and the **Peacock** continued on her voyage until the end of October, when she arrived at New York, having captured, principally in the Bay of Biscay, 14 British merchantmen.

### Hampton in the War of 1812

In this second war with Great Britain, Hampton suffered more severely than in the first. Under Admiral Cockburn, the British made an attack on Craney Island at the mouth of Elizabeth River. That place was defended by six hundred Virginia militia, recently called into service. With no other aid than a half-finished redoubt, and the co-operation of a few volunteers from the shipping in port, they beat back the British, though numbering three thousand men. Foiled in this first attack, the British turned to glut their vengeance on the little hamlet of Hampton, situated on the north side of James River.

On the 25th of June, 1813, he landed a force of 2500 men at what is now "Indian River," and with a small squadron sailed to the mouth of Hampton Creek, from whence he shelled the town. The place was defended by 450 Virginia militia under Col. Crutchfield stationed at "Little England" with seven small cannon. Taken in the flank by the British land force, the small garrison had to abandon the place and retreat up the peninsula. The British occupation was attended with barbarous circumstances, the responsibility of which they afterwards ascribed to some French prisoners, who constituted a part of the British force.

Governor Barbour in his message to the Legislature spoke of the private houses that were plundered, the gray hairs that were exposed to wanton insult, the sick man that was murdered in his bed under circumstances of peculiar aggravation, the females that were publicly borne off to suffer the last degree of unutterable violence, and the house of God given over to sacrilegious outrage.

Religion was at a low ebb in Virginia for many years after the Revolution. The spread of rationalistic ideas and the breaking up of the old establishment affected even the new sects of Baptists and Methodists, while it almost destroyed the Episcopal church. The small congregation, which assembled in the old church in the parish, hobbled along under the ministrations of Rev. William Nixon, Rev. Henry Skyren, who died in 1795, Rev. John Jones Spooner, who died in 1799, Rev. Benjamin Brown, who died January 17, 1806, and Rev. George Halson, who officiated till the war of 1812. It was probably by performing the duties of teachers of the Hampton Academy that these ministers managed to obtain a livelihood.

During the interval between Parson Brown and the war of 1812, the frame work of the tower which stood on the west side of the church became so decayed that the bell had to be taken down and was placed in the angle made by the church and the tower. From that position it was removed by order of Major Crutchfield to the guardhouse of the American Encampment at "Little England," and soon the tongue fell out, and the hours were struck by an ax, till the bell cracked. After the capture of Hampton by the British soon after, the churchyard was used by them for a slaughter pen and the church itself for a barracks.<sup>1</sup>

### **Hampton After the War of 1812**

After the conclusion of the war, religion among the people was too feeble to permit much interest to be taken in the church, and the churchyard was used by the public as a grazing ground for cattle, horses and hogs. Soon not a vestige remained of the doors, windows, floors or furniture. The general religious awakening began in Virginia under Rt. Rev. Bishop Moore about 1824, and in that year Mrs. Jane Hope, eldest daughter of Commodore James Barron, and Mr. Richard B. Servant started subscriptions for repairing the church walls.

Shortly after a vestry was elected, and money was raised to restore and furnish the church. Then a minister, Rev. Mark A. Chevers, was named, and the old vestry book was dragged from its hiding place.

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<sup>1</sup> Meade, Bishop William, *Old Churches, Ministers and Families of Virginia*, 2 Vols., 1878.



After the destruction of Fort George, in 1749, nothing was done for many years to restore the fort at Point Comfort. During the war of the Revolution the French threw up some slight fortifications there. The experiences of the war of 1812 advised that it should be made a permanent stronghold. The present Fort Monroe was commenced by the Federal government in 1819, and about 1830 the work began of sinking rocks on the Rip Raps opposite, and afterwards a fort was erected called Fort Calhoun, and subsequently Fort Wool. Fort Monroe became a frequent resort of visitors, and for their accommodation a hotel called the Hygeia was built which was in later years moved from the first site, near where the Fort Y. M. C. A. now stands to a location on the beach, on the East side of the street leading to the wharf. Immediately opposite The Chamberlin Hotel was completed in 1893. It was a hostelry of great magnificence but was burned to the ground on March 7, 1920. The Hygeia was razed by order of the War Department. The Sherwood Inn, another hotel remains, but has been taken over by purchase by the Government.

The commercial and religious interests of Elizabeth City County were not the only ones which suffered by war. After peace was made in 1783, the ancient schools of Syms and Eaton were much neglected, for, under the changed state of affairs, the ministers and churchwardens of Elizabeth City parish, and even the justices, doubted their true succession as incorporators. Thus the lands were again wasted, and the schools much impaired. At length, in 1805, by virtue of an Act of the Legislature, the two schools were incorporated in one as the "Hampton Academy," and, aided by new contributions, continued for many years as a prosperous institution for the benefit of the children of Elizabeth City and of Poquoson Parish, York County. The following list of teachers was furnished by the late Col. John B. Cary, of Richmond, who was the last teacher of the school previous to its union with the general public school system; Prior to 1826, Parson Halstead; 1826-1829, John Page; 1829-1832, C. J. D. Pryor; 1832-1835, George Cooper; 1837-1840, C. J. D. Pryor; 1840-1847, John A. Getty; 1847-1852, John B. Cary.

In the year 1846 the General Assembly adopted the present public school system for the State, but its operation



was left in the cities and towns to the council and in the counties to a popular vote. Elizabeth City was one of those counties which decided favorably for the school system. In 1851 it was divided into school districts and Hampton was comprised in District No. 3. In 1852 the Hampton Academy was associated with the school system and its treasurer, William S. Slater, appeared before the Board of school commissioners for the county and reported the fund belonging to the school to amount to \$10,706.55. At a meeting of the commissioners held January 6, 1855, it was resolved that the commissioners of District No. 3 be authorized to take charge of Hampton Academy as the district school house.

While the school system was not at this time adopted by all the counties of Virginia, its operation in Elizabeth City is well worthy of consideration. In his annual report for the year 1854 the county superintendent says: "The free school system, taking into consideration the sparseness of our population in some parts of the county, and the consequent increased size of some of the districts, appears to be working remarkably well. I think it is realizing the expectation of some of its most sanguine friends and rapidly securing favor among its former opponents."

In another report he advances some ideas as to school architecture, which have been put forward anew in recent days and approved by the public. He has hopes "that for the future, in the erection of school houses, the wretched plan of school architecture, which now so generally obtains in Virginia, will be rejected, and that ornament as well as comfort will be consulted in their structure."

During the era of improved public education, John B. Cary, the last teacher of the old Hampton Academy, established a military school of his own, which was attended by young men from all parts of Virginia, and other Southern States. Among his pupils were Captain James Barron Hope, of Norfolk, who attained much distinction as a poet, Capt. W. Gordon McCabe, of Richmond, former President of the Virginia Historical Society, and the late Col. Thomas Tabb, of Hampton, one of the most distinguished lawyers of Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Cary was an enthusiastic teacher and had excellent courses in Latin and Greek as well as music and mathe-

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<sup>1</sup> Armstrong, Syms-Eaton Academy, 1902.

matics. His discipline was strict, and the motto of the school was: "Order is Heaven's first law." The young men had a literary society called "The Old Boys," which was addressed by eminent men on suitable occasions. In 1859, the orator was Ex-President John Tyler, who for several years before the war passed the summer in a villa which he caused to be erected on a point of land opposite to the town, on the east side of Hampton River, and called the "Villa Margaret."

Still another school advanced the educational condition of the county. In 1854, Rev. Martin Forey, a Baptist minister, erected near Hampton the Chesapeake Female College, which in 1859 appears to have been converted into a boy's school.

Between 1850 and 1860 Eastern Virginia greatly improved under the new system of farming introduced by Edmund Ruffin, which restored the fertility of the overworked soil. Millions of dollars were added to the value of the lands. Hampton and Elizabeth City County shared in the prosperity, and there were fewer places in the United States where the people lived in greater comfort. From the plantations were obtained abundant crops of corn and wheat and from the gardens almost all of the best vegetables. From the waters of the running creeks and inlets were taken the most delicious fish and oysters; and wild ducks and geese not infrequently contributed to the delights of the table.

There were all kinds of amusements, such as fishing in the creeks, sailing on the rivers, fox-hunting, card-playing and dancing. Yearly the town was paraded by a numerous troop of masked riders, who attired in all kinds of quaint disguises, moved quietly down the streets at night to disappear no one seemed to know where.

The Hotels at Old Point Comfort were frequent resorts of visitors, and the band at the fort not only discoursed sweet music to the troops, but was used by the officers in serenades and to furnish music at the military balls.

The population of Elizabeth City County in 1791 was 3450, of whom 1876 were negro slaves, 18 were free negroes, and 1556 were white people. In 1800 the population was only 2778, of whom 1522 were negro slaves, 18 were free negroes, and 1238 were white people. In 1810 the popula-

tion made up more than its losses, and was 3598, of whom 1734 were negro slaves, 75 were free negroes, and 1789 were whites. In 1820 the population was 3789 and in 1830, 5033.

In the last year (1830) the population of Hampton was 1120. It contained at that time about 130 dwelling houses, two Baptist churches, one Methodist and an Episcopal church, one Academy and one private school, six dry goods stores, ten grocery stores, two taverns and three castor oil manufactories. The principal mechanical pursuits were shoemaking, blacksmith's work, house carpentering and ship building. It enjoyed a considerable emolument from the money circulated by the Federal government in the building and maintenance of Fort Monroe and the Rip-Raps. There were two lawyers resident in the town and four physicians. In 1840 the population of Elizabeth City County was 3706, of whom 1708 were negro slaves, 44 were free negroes, and 1954 were white people. In 1860 the population of Elizabeth City County was 5798, of whom 2417 were negro slaves, 201 were free negroes, and 3180 were white people. The population of Hampton the same year was 1848, of whom 782 were negro slaves, 73 were free negroes, and 993 were white people.

### **Hampton During the War of 1861-1865**

In the war for Southern Independence, the people of Hampton were warmly for the Confederate cause, but their close proximity to the most powerful fort of the United States rendered their position a most unhappy one. The first regular battle of the war occurred in their vicinity at Big Bethel near the place where Colonel Mallory was killed during the American Revolution. Nearly all the families abandoned the town, and on August, 1862, the place was fired by order of General Magruder. The soldiers selected to do this were property owners in the town, who approved the policy, and the few remaining residents, not over twenty in all, were notified in advance. This drastic and perhaps useless action was taken because of a dispatch from General Butler, which fell into General Magruder's hands that the houses would be used for military purposes. In the general conflagration the church also was consumed, with the exception of the massive walls which remained standing. Only

five houses were left, and the citizens by thus yielding to the flames, property worth \$200,000 demonstrated "their intensive devotion to the cause they had espoused and for which they considered no sacrifice too great."

At the breaking out of the war, John B. Cary, principal of the Hampton Military Institute, was commissioned by General Lee, Major of all the Hampton troops and after the battle of Bethel, in which he took part, he was promoted Lieutenant Colonel of the Thirty-second Virginia Regiment, commanded by Colonel Ewell, President of William and Mary College. It was on the occasion of a visit paid by Colonel Cary to General Butler under a flag of truce that the latter originated the expression "contraband," as applied to the negroes. Colonel Cary demanded the return of some negroes on the ground that they were private property, but General Butler declared that they were "contraband of war," and refused to give them up. After the war was over Colonel Cary settled in Richmond, where he was for some time superintendent of schools and amassed a fortune through his great business ability.

During the war the possession of Fort Monroe by the Federal authorities was a factor of great value to them in eventually achieving success. It became the starting point of great naval and land expeditions against the South, a great depot for prisoners and armaments, and a place of refuge from disaster. It was formidable guns of Fort Monroe that probably saved the Federal fleet in 1862 from entire destruction by the Merrimac. It was here that Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, was confined after one of the most gallant resistances ever put up by any people in defence of self-government. The cell in which he was shackled, like an ordinary criminal, is pointed out, but it conveys no pleasant ideas of the magnanimity of his conquerors.

During this period the country between Fort Monroe and the present grounds of the Hampton Institute was occupied by a wilderness of tents called Camp Hamilton. The old Chesapeake Female Institute was used as a Hospital. This was connected by a bridge with Hampton Hospital, the great receiving place for sick and wounded soldiers of the Federal army in Virginia. This last building occupied the site of the present Hampton Institute.

The neighborhood was the refuge place of hundreds of negroes, and the burned section, where Hampton once stood, was filled with their rude shelters propped up against the brick chimneys, which survived the fire.

### **Hampton After the War of 1865-1910**

In 1865, the war ended and the old Hampton families flocked back to the ruins of their once beautiful homes. The streets and lots were marked out again and house building commenced.

The courthouse reverted to the county authorities, and the graded school for freedmen was transferred to the Lincoln School, which had been built of old hospital wards.

The few survivors of the congregation of the old church served more or less irregularly in the Odd Fellows Hall on Court Street, known as Patrick Henry Hall. The first regular rector after the war was Rev. J. B. McCarty, who had been a chaplain in the Federal army. In less than five years the church was again restored, and it has at present a flourishing congregation. A tablet on the walls gives a short history of the edifice and its ministers followed by this quotation from the psalms: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever."

Among the relics of the past, which are the prized possessions of the church is the old vestry book to which reference has been made, and a cup, chalice and patten of beautiful and antique work. The communion cup is by long odds the oldest church plate in the United States. It bears the hall mark of 1617, and was given by Mrs. Mary Robinson, of London, in 1619, to the "church in Smith's Hundred in Virginia," as the inscription upon it testifies. This hundred lay on the north side of James River between Weyanoke and Sandy Point, but was wiped out by the massacre in 1622. The name of the hundred was changed, in 1619, from "Smith's Hundred," which was its title during Sir Thomas Smith's presidency of the London Company to "Southampton Hundred," when the Earl of Southampton succeeded Smith. As Hampton was named from the same great friend of Virginia, it is properly the custodian of this elegant and unique treasure.

Among the tombstones still to be seen in the church-



yard, perhaps the most interesting are those of Captain George Wray, who died April 9, 1758, and Captain Henry Mowatt, of the British Navy, who in October, 1775, burned the town of Portland, Maine, because it refused to give him provisions.

The school comes next after the church in importance, and as soon as order was restored out of chaos, this question enlisted the attention of the people of Hampton. The old Hampton Academy building had perished in the fire of 1862, but the mortgage bonds in which its endowment fund of 10,000 had been invested were preserved by Col. J. C. Phillips, who took them to Richmond with him, when he refugeeed there. A small school building was put up, this time of brick, which performed a valuable service for many years. In 1902 this building made way for the present handsome modern up-to-date structure. A tablet placed in the entrance hall proclaims the name of the school as the "Syms-Eaton Academy," thus perpetuating the memory of the two noble benefactors, who considered aright that they could find no better way of attaining true glory than educating their fellow men.

In March, 1866, Captain Wilder had been succeeded by General Samuel C. Armstrong as superintendent of contrabands and officer in charge of the Freedmen's Bureau. From the beginning he took special interest in the colored schools, having charge of those in ten counties in eastern Virginia. It was his suggestion that Hampton would be a fitting spot for a permanent training school for colored teachers.

In 1870, the old Chesapeake Female College, which had been used as a hospital during the war, was purchased for the government together with the forty acres of land owned by General B. F. Butler for \$50,000, as a home for disabled soldiers. The number of buildings was increased to nearly seventy and the government purchased forty-three acres of land in addition to the original forty. Three large buildings have been erected for hospital purposes and are supplied with every modern appliance for the sick. Nearly 17000 veterans have been cared for since the Home was established, and about 9000 of these rest in the National Cemetery nearby. As a result of the expenditure made by

these Federal veterans of every nationality a town between Hampton and Fort Monroe has grown up called "Phoebus," named in honor of Mr. Harrison Phoebus, a successful hotel man. Its population is over 3000.

During the war the old Hygeia Hotel was carted away, because it interfered with the training of guns in the Fort. After the war, the Hygeia was at once rebuilt on its later site close to the beach, but it was only a small building. In 1867, Mr. Phoebus purchased it, fitted it with all the modern conveniences and greatly enlarged it, till it had capacity enough to accommodate 1200 guests. It became a great resort for pleasure seekers, and Mr. Phoebus became very wealthy. Some years ago the Federal government decreed its removal, and as a substitute the splendid brick building known as the Chamberlin Hotel superseded, but unfortunately burned as stated elsewhere.

In keeping with the growth of the vicinity, since the war, has been the enormous development of Fort Monroe. The present fortifications embrace a parapet wall a mile and a quarter long, enclosing eighty-six acres and costing over \$2,000,000. The fortress is partially washed by the waters of Hampton Roads and is separated from the mainland by a wide and deep moat. It is equipped with disappearing guns, which have a range of twelve miles or more. Some consider it next in strength to the celebrated fortress of Gibraltar, though probably the fortifications of Quebec from their natural advantages are more impregnable.

Fort Wool, on the Rip Raps opposite to Fort Monroe, has also been immensely strengthened. Like the other, it is equipped with immense disappearing guns and the latest machinery for defence in time of war.

Indeed, the whole region of what was known, in 1619, as "Elizabeth City Corporation" has greatly improved in the forty-five years since the war, and its appearance is a monument to the industry of the inhabitants. From the west end of Newport News to Old Point Comfort there is a population close on to 50,000 people compared with about 5000 in 1860. The population of Elizabeth City County is upwards of 26000 and that of Hampton very near 8000. The town has handsome paved streets and sidewalks, electric lights, electric cars,, fine stores and bank buildings, and is



connected with Richmond by one of the best railroad lines in the Union, while the wharf at Old Point is the stopping place of steamers to Norfolk, to Washington, and to Baltimore and New York. It is connected with Newport News, three and a half miles distant, by railroad and street railway service, and with Norfolk, fifteen miles distant, by a number of steamship lines and three fast ferries.

Statistics compiled by a prominent physician indicate climatic conditions in the county as equal to any found in the State. The water supply is abundant and truck farming in the immediate vicinity is extensively carried on. The manufactories consist of saw mills, iron foundries, and shoe, sash and blind, oil and crab factories. The pluck of its inhabitants exhibited under so many vicissitudes of fortune in the past has won for the town the name of the "game-cock town."











